

EDITORIALS

Digitized records

City Clerk Leticia Vacek moves San Antonio's history into the future.

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GARY MARTIN

S.A. losing clout in D.C.

U.S. Rep Charlie Gonzalez's departure is a blow to the Alamo City.

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Kudos for city's digitized records

Making archives more accessible is good public policy.

The digital revolution has changed the way people communicate, conduct research and do business. While the private sector has quickly capitalized on the potential of the Internet and digital communication, government has typically been a slow adopter.

That sluggishness is beginning to change, with the biggest advances coming in government transparency. At the state, county and city level, online tools exist for citizens to track contracting, tax collection and expenditures.

The San Antonio City Clerk's office is responsible for storing and maintaining the city's official records. In a city with a history as long and rich as that of San Antonio, that also makes the office a historical trove.

Express-News staff writer Josh Baugh reported that records requests used to involve the clerk's office manually searching a 60,000-square-foot warehouse. No longer.

City Clerk Leticia Vacek has begun the process of digitizing San Antonio's official history, putting online in a searchable format everything from the minutes of the Spanish and Mexican municipal governments of San Antonio prior to Texas independence to City Council or-



ROBIN JERSTAD/FOR THE EXPRESS-NEWS

City Clerk Leticia Vacek looks at an 1885 reproduction of the original Alamo plat. The map, along with other official city records, is being digitized for easier access.

dinances and election results up to the present day.

The clerk's office is six months into the digitizing project and has years of work to come. "We're just scanning in, digitizing, indexing as fast as we can," Tina Flores, who oversees the archives, told the newspaper.

The digitized product is good for researchers — both amateur and professional — and taxpayers. Vacek and her office deserve praise for making San Antonio's history and official records more accessible and for streamlining the records-request process.

For a digital peek into San Antonio's official past, visit the city clerk's website at <http://www.sanantonio.gov/clerk/Archives/>.